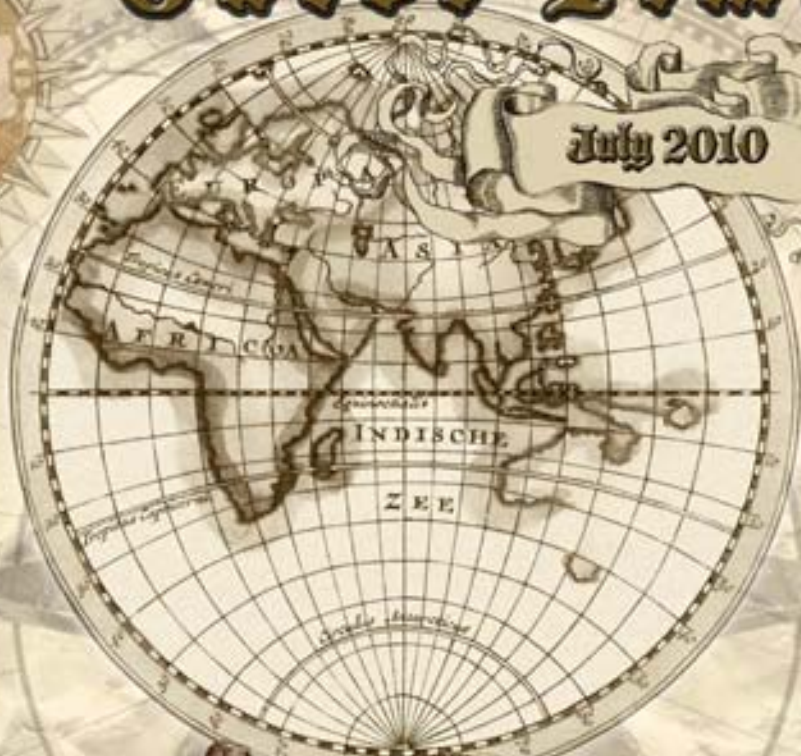


Gator Times

July 2010

USS Nassau



Shellback Edition

Gator Times



Contents

30 years
LHA 4

GatorTimes

Commanding Officer
Capt. Ronald Reis

Executive Officer
Capt. Samuel Norton

Command Master Chief
CMDCM(AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak

Administration Officer
Lt. Samantha Savage

Visual Information Division Officer
Ensign Aphria Maxima

Public Affairs Officer
MCC(SW/AW) Chris Hoffpauir

Editor
MC1(SW) James Stillpeck

Design & Layout
MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau

Staff
MC2 Coleman Thompson
MC2 Patrick Gordon
MC3(SW) Chris Williamson
MC3 Desiree Green

Gator Times is a product of the USS Nassau (LHA 4) Public Affairs Office. The editorial content of this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the official views of the command or

FEATURES

- 3 Nassau Pollywogs Await Their Fate
- 4 Nassau Wogs Appease King Neptune
- 5-6 Crossing the Line
- 7 Successful COMREL in Seychelles
- 8 Big Nasty 2-0 After Seychelles Win
- 9 Nassau Crew Enjoys Creole Culture

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Captain's Call
- CMC Corner
- 10 Chaplain's Corner
- 11 Command Achievements



On The Cover:
Gator Times: Shellback Edition
Illustration by MCSN (SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau



As my tour as Nassau's Commanding Officer comes to a close, I want to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication.

Since I took command of this capital warship in February 2009 Nassau's crew proved through their effort that this ship is indeed the Navy's Top Gator.

We've gone from sitting in a dry dock in Norfolk to the Horn of Africa in support of America's interests abroad.

Along the way Nassau won a third consecutive Battle "E," the Commander Naval Surface Forces Unit Tactics award, the Chief of Naval Operations Safety "S" award, the Green "H" medical excellence award, and a second consecutive Golden Anchor retention award.

During this deployment Nassau's Sailors and Marines provided humanitarian aid in Haiti, trained with the French Foreign Legion in Djibouti, and deterred pirates off the coast of Somalia.

As Capt. Samuel Norton takes command and brings Nassau home, I will be preparing to take command of USS John C. Stennis in Bremerton, Wa. I wish every

Captain's Call

Capt. Ronald Reis
Commanding Officer
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



one, both aboard Nassau and at home, the very best and thank you support during my tenure as Commanding Officer.

CMC Corner



Shipmates, Nassau Family and Friends

The past month has been busy and exciting. After our port visit in the Seychelles we made our way back to our operating area off the Horn of Africa. Although we were back in the hot box, there was plenty of enthusiasm because we knew we only had a few more weeks left before we headed north through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal and into the much cooler Mediterranean Sea.

Nassau held her 20th change of command ceremony on July 23. We bid a fond farewell to Capt. Reis who commanded the ship for the past 18 months. I'd like to personally send my best wishes to Capt. Reis, his wife Nancy and their children with their next assignment to the USS John C. Stennis. It's been an honor serving with someone of Capt. Reis's caliber. I'd also like to congratulate our new commanding officer, Capt. Samuel Norton. I look forward to serving with him over the next several months.

With only a few more weeks of deployment left there's plenty of excitement – not just about homecoming, but also the upcoming Tiger Cruise. Our Sailors are excited about having friends and loved ones come aboard to experience what they do for a living. For those joining us on Tiger Cruise I look forward to meeting you and guarantee a great time.

I ask our Sailors to keep safety first at hand. When performing tasks and maintenance focus on what you're doing and don't let the excitement of returning home overtake you. We want everyone to return home safely.

In closing, I'd like to thank Nassau's Sailors for all you do! Your hard work and dedication make a difference you all can be proud of. To our families and friends, I truly can't thank you enough for your warm thoughts, prayers and constant support during this deployment. We'll be home before you know it!

Nassau Pollywogs Await Their Fate

Story by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
Illustration by MC3(SW) Williamson

Pollywogs, or "Wogs", aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) anxiously awaited the appearance of Davey Jones when the ship crossed the equator June 21. Nassau held a Crossing the Line ceremony June 22 and 23 to induct 1,044 pollywogs into the shellback community. Shellbacks are not just Sailors and Marines who cross the equator, but anyone who participates in the trials to appease King Neptune, the god of the sea, on any seafaring vessel that crosses the equator.

"A talent show will be held the night of June 21," said Senior Enlisted Shellback Coordinator Senior Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW/SHELLBACK) Harold Gibbs III before the events began. "Davey Jones is expected to appear and announce King Neptune's rage, as he always does, and the wogs will attempt to appease him with their talents."

Gibbs has crossed the equator five times since 1997 and said he has seen the ire of King Neptune first hand. He added that the Crossing the Line ceremony dates back to the beginnings of naval ships.



"Legend states that the Assistant Supply Officer Lt. Cmdr. Richard Otowski (SHELLBACK) was probably around for the first ceremony, but he's very old and doesn't remember the details," Gibbs said.

"Arrrrrrgh," said Otlowski, from Chesapeake, Va.

Gibbs said the ceremony was voluntary and held to make sure Sailors and Marines are tried and tested against the harsh conditions of the sea.

"I don't know what's going to happen, but I can assure you that there will be a cleansing of the wogs," Gibbs said prior to the ceremony. "All of the wogs will gain a little salt on their proverbial sea beards."

Yeoman Seaman Caleb Marlow (WOG) works in close proximity to Gibbs.

"He disappears for hours on end through the secret door in his office," Marlow said while preparing for the talent show. "I can't open it but there is a trail of salt leading to the wall behind his desk that I have to sweep up every time he goes. I'm anxiously awaiting my fate."

Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/WOG)

Robert Welsh thought that Davey Jones would take it easy on him since he is a chief.

"I found a seahorse head in my rack last night," Welsh said as he designed his "Wog T-shirt".

Davey Jones' rage was appeased June 23 according to Gibbs, but he added that he never knows what's going to happen. Gibbs said that Davey Jones has many tricks up his sleeve and King Neptune's anger is not always so easily appeased.

"I'm really excited for this event," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class (SW/WOG) Richard Wolsifer waiting for the talent show to begin. "I'm also really scared."

"Arrrrrrgh," said Otlowski.

Nassau Wogs Appease King Neptune

Story MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau (LHA 4) held a Crossing the Line ceremony June 24.

Crossing the Line ceremonies, or the Shellback Ceremony, is a longstanding seafaring tradition held when a ship crosses over the equator. Everyone who has never crossed the line before is called a pollywog and must complete the ceremony to be initiated as a shellback and gain the favor of King Neptune.

Participants woke up at 5:30 a.m. to Pollywog Reveille. Sirens, whistles, and whatever obnoxious sound making devices the shellbacks could get their hands on were used to wake up the wogs. After a rousing recitation of nursery rhymes and other assorted songs, the wogs began their journey through their trials in hopes of appeasing King Neptune.

"If you have the opportunity to become a shellback, take it," said Air Department's Leading Chief Petty Officer Master Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (AW/SW) Amos Harvey, from Atlanta. Harvey played the role of the Royal Baby for the Royal Procession where wogs bow before King Neptune and beg for his favor. "I had the opportunity to become a shellback in 1982 but we turned around a day before we crossed the equator. I finally became a shellback in 2006."

Harvey added that East Coast Sailors are rarely offered the opportunity to cross the equator due to the areas they normally operate in, especially East Coast Marines.

"We are not usually given the opportunity because nine times out of ten we are dropped off in the Middle East," said Lance Cpl. James Moore, from Covington, La. "It was very challenging to endure all of the wog trials, but I enjoyed it. I'm honored to be a Marine shell-back."

Sailors and Marines packed into Nassau's Mess Deck with plates of colorful food in their hands. Some of the entrees for the Pollywog Breakfast included the

choice of green eggs and ham, wog slime consisting of grits cooked with blue food coloring, and mayonnaise covered cinnamon rolls. Once inside the Mess Deck the traditional breakfast the shellbacks planned turned into an infamous Pollywog Rebellion. Food flew across the Mess Deck and the wogs resisted the shellback's demands, but the rebellion was overthrown in short order by the trusty shellbacks and Master Shellback USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Command Master Chief CMDCM (AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak.

"Whenever there is a shellback ceremony there is always a 'wog rebellion,'" said Nassau's Weapons Department Leading Chief Petty Officer Senior Chief Aviation Ordnanceman (AW/SW) Julius Gayden, from Monroe, La., who became a shellback in 1984. Gayden played the role of King Neptune, traditionally played by the oldest shellback onboard the ship. "It's a part of the ceremony and I am proud of how smoothly the ceremony went. Events like these are a testament to why longstanding naval traditions need to be upheld and can be upheld without incident or hazing if conducted properly and with the proper khaki supervision."

Once the wog rebellion was settled and the wogs went through their cleansing in the ship's Hangar Bay, they made their way up to the Flight Deck for the Royal Procession where the wogs finally become shellbacks.

"It was exciting to go through the wog trials," said Ship's Serviceman Seaman Rafael Garay, from Cliffside Park, N.J. "I can't wait until my next opportunity to cross the equator. Then it will be my turn to test the wogs."

Gayden said that King Neptune has cleansed the ship of wogs and Nassau is now ready to carry out the rest of their mission.



Engineman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Timothy Clouser, from Council Bluffs, Iowa, carefully balances his breakfast on his head on the Mess Deck during a Crossing the Line ceremony aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4).

Know Ye That On June 23, 2010
USS Nassau Appeared in
King Neptune's Royal Domain at
Latitude 0000
Longitude 054°19'



Sailor and Marine Polliwogs "Row the Boat" during a Crossing the Line ceremony aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4).



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) 3rd Class (AW/SW) Elliott Sipe from Millington, W.Va., tries to swim out of Wog Breakfast on the Mess Deck during a Crossing the Line ceremony aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4).



Successful COMREL in Seychelles

Story & photos by MC2 Patrick Gordon
USS Nassau Public Affairs



Lance Cpl. Mark Valanawski, of Birchrun, Mich., Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Jessica Castro, of Elizabeth, N.J., Logistics Specialist 3rd Class (SW/AW) Jorge Resto, of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and USS Nassau (LHA 4) Chaplain Lt. Victoria Chappell, of Virginia Beach, Va., assist the St. Elisabeth orphanage.

Nearly 50 Sailors and Marines from USS Nassau (LHA 4) volunteered their time and efforts at St. Elisabeth's Orphanage in Mont Fleuri, Seychelles June 28.

The purpose of the community relations (COMREL) project was to paint the interior of the orphanage's main house.

"This COMREL was an opportunity for us to help people in another community," said Nassau Chaplain Lt. Victoria Chappell, of Virginia Beach, Va. "It was also to let the Sailors and Marines have a good time while spreading good will."

Service members passed out toys and played soccer, basketball and board games with the children before the painting started. Shortly after work began, more Sailors and Marines from other COMRELs arrived to help after rain had stopped their own projects.

Those involved were happy to spend their day helping in a foreign community.

"This was a great chance for us to restore the orphans' home and really give the kids something to smile about," said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Shawn Blount from Bronx, N.Y. "It was a lot of fun to play with the kids, help out the community and really show that we care."

After the work was completed the volunteers were treated to refreshments provided by the orphanage's nuns. The leftover paint was donated to the orphanage for future use.

Chappell said that all the volunteers did a phenomenal job, doing a week's worth of painting in just a few hours. She added that the effect of these COMRELs is felt by more than those that the service members help.

"Because of really positive experiences like this project, the kids are going to remember Americans as friendly, good people," said Chappell. "Even though small COMRELs seem like a drop in the bucket of good will, enough drops eventually fill that bucket."

Big Nasty 2-0 After Seychelles Win

Story & photos by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs



USS Nassau's (LHA 4) rugby team, the Big Nasty Rugby Club, squeezed a 19-14 victory out of the Seychelles Rugby Football Club June 25.

Marine Cpl. Hector Araiza, a flanker from El Paso, Texas, was selected as the most valuable player after breaking the tie on the last play of the game. Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (SW/FMF) Michael Brown, a prop from Noble, Okla., and Lance Cpl. Charles Huff, a lock from Columbus, Ohio, both scored as well.

"I've had a great time learning how to play rugby," Araiza said. "It gives us the opportunity to represent our country in a good way with our teamwork and dedication. I'm just glad to be a part of the team."

The Big Nasty Rugby Club was newly formed in May before their first game with the French Foreign Legion. Already, the team is off to a great start with a perfect 2-0 season. The embassies of each port set up the games and the Big Nasty wants to play a rugby team at each port Nassau visits.

"I am impressed at what we've accomplished in only two months," said Marine Capt. Jake Womble, the head coach and eight-man from Tulsa, Okla. "About eighty percent of this team had no rugby experience prior to this deployment. Marines and Sailors from many different departments aboard have come together to form a winning team."

The four weeks before each big game, the rugby team reports to the Flight Deck at reveille for their practice sessions. This is when the rugby veterans and enthusiasts come together to teach Sailors and Marines how to play the game.

"Big Nasty is a testament to Sailors and Marines coming together to accomplish something good," said Marine Capt. Ken Tarr, a scrum-half from York, Pa. "The discipline and teamwork we are taught in the service really pays off. Our perfect record is an outstanding accomplishment for a team with only a few months experience working together."



(Top) Nassau's Big Nasty Rugby Club links up for a scrum against the Seychelles Rugby Football Club.

(Bottom) Lance Cpl. Kurt Salmon, from Denison, Iowa, flanker for Nassau's Big Nasty Rugby Club, jumps for the ball during a line-out.

Nassau Crew Enjoys Creole Culture

Story & photo by MC3 Desiree Green
USS Nassau Public Affairs



Ensign Amy S. Sullivan takes a lesson in traditional Seychellois dancing at the Kaz Kreol restaurant in Mahe, Seychelles during USS Nassau's (LHA 4) recent port visit to the island.

Sailors assigned to USS Nassau (LHA 4) dined and danced the night away at Kaz Kreol, a popular local restaurant in Seychelles, June 28.

The evening event was the last of several Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tours during the ship's four-day port visit to the island.

"I thought it was excellent," said Damage Controlman 1st Class (SW/AW) Marcus D. Pope from Atlanta, Ga. "It was set up beautifully. The light from the moon reflected off the water into the restaurant and there were crabs in the sand around the diners sitting outside. The band kept everyone entertained and the music playing while the staff made everyone feel comfortable."

The restaurant, located in the southeast region of Mahe, offered service members breathtaking views of the tropical island while experiencing traditional Seychellois cuisine. The buffet included red snapper fish, octopus casserole, prawns and chicken done with Creole flavors.

"The food was awesome," said Pope. "I realized I was eating octopus and thought 'No way!'"

After dining, traditional Seychellois dancers entertained the guests by doing three separate routines. Following the show, the band encouraged all of the crew to join their traditional dancers for a lesson.

"My favorite part of the entire evening was the dancing," said Interior Communications Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Diane Ferrel from Sebastopol, Calif. "It was full of energy and excitement. I love learning about new cultures and it felt amazing."

The crew agreed that the dinner hit the right note to wrap up the much needed liberty port.

"The food and atmosphere were wonderful," said Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class (AW/SW) Luciana Crutcher, from Nashville, Tenn. "I had a nice time. It was long overdue and much needed for the crew after being surrounded by nothing but water. I think Seychelles gave us piece of mind. I would definitely go back with friends and family."

Chaplain's Corner



Chaplain's Corner provided by USS Nassau
Command Religious Programs

Coming soon, educators from the Fleet and Family Support Centers will come aboard the NASSAU, answering questions such as:

- ☐ Will my toddler remember me? My teen is interested in new things—how do I get involved?
- ☐ It's homecoming time! What are your expectations? Do you know your spouse's or significant other's expectations? What is the probability that your expectations are the same?
- ☐ Singles! What have your friends back home been doing? What has changed? What has not changed? Your homeport may have more to offer than you know.
- ☐ How do you know what a car is worth? Did you know that your credit report may be pulled at every lot you visit? What is a balloon clause?

But you don't have to be a Sailor on the NASSAU to benefit from these great classes on car buying, parenting, relationships, and more—FFSC at Norfolk, Little Creek, and Oceana hold weekly classes free to all service members and their family members. So get a jump start on your return and reunion with you loved one by contacting your local FFSC and seeing what they have to offer you today.

<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/NorfolkSTA/FleetFamilyReadiness/AboutFleetFamilyReadiness/index.htm>

Relationship issues? Both you and your significant other can see your local chaplains shipboard or on base. Today you can both start learning improved communication and problem solving skills before you even reunite!

CREDO RETREATS FREE FOR ALL SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Here's a way to plan a weekend away with your family or friends, and it's all for free: CREDO retreats. Get away from it all, decompress from the rigors of deployment, and reconnect with your family, friends, and yourself at a nice hotel or retreat center. Here are the upcoming weekends-to-remember that you don't want to miss out on:

RETREATS

Personal Growth: DEC 7-9
Marriage Enrichment: SEP 10-12, OCT 15-17
NOV 5-7, DEC 10-12
Family Enrichment: DEC 3-5
Women's: AUG 20-22

All retreats are free, including room and meals. Pre-registration is required; call 757-444-7654/1091 to register or for information.

COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS



ESWS Qualified

ACAA Joseph Melton	YNSA Christopher	HN Joshua Plummer	HM3 Luis Gia
PR1 Richard Sheppard	LaFrancois	ABH3 William Hallowell	EM3 Joshua Dowell
AC1 Brian Delong	IS3 Sean Hayes	HM3 Justin Coufal	BMSN Franz Gayle
MA2 Elizabeth Luna	HN Victor Bermudez	OS2 Cynthia Henderson	HM3 Adam Voegtie
ABF3 Ryan Moore	HM3 Michael Brown	IC3 Jackie Maddox	LSSN Qi Chen
ABH2 Gordon Brown	EM2 Galenleif Tacardon	HM2 Jane Nonthaveth	CSSA Cameo Hughes
MM3 Ervin Gegprifti	EN3 Matthew Smith	HM1 Wesley Corwin	AC2 Benjamin Gray
BMSN Leo Biggs	BM2 Miranda Pellotalers	CTT2 Kevin Kulow	ET3 Daniel Miles
IT3 Lucien Matthias	HM2 Scott Reid	HM2 Mark Willitts	IT3 Rene Madrigal
OS3 Van Wright	HM2 David House	ABH3 Richard Sharpe	ET2 Patrick Johnson
AE3 Alexandra Wong	ITSN Terryn Large	BM3 Ray Valle	SHSN Matthew McKenna
HN Luke Murray	QMSN Joshua Nelson	ITSA James Charette	BMSN Chris Johnson
IC3 Almus Porter	SN Eliza Taylor	AS2 Leslie Stanek	OS3 Aaron Hooks



EAWS Qualified

HT3 Daniel Rafalski	AO3 Matthew Bahner	AOAN Brandon Bolton
HT2 Travis Reed	HT1 Eduardo Wilson	ABHAN Cesar
AG3 Jordan Fluth	MM2 Justin Holliday	Penatrabous
MMC Jose Torres	AOAN Hector Meza	ABHAN Shrieka Carr
HM2 Edgar Tucker	DC2 Randolph Gaul	MM1 Mario Williams
AGAN Logan Vath	AOAN Durand	CS1 Preston Perry
AN Rashad Williams	Somsavath	ABFAN Ryan Waedekin
ENC Janet Hall	AO3 William Austin	IT1 Taurland Brinkley
LSSN Travis	AO3 Darian McKinney	IT2 Nhat Le
Heidelberger	LS2 Ravinesh Prasad	AZ3 Francisco
AOAN Juan Caceres		Hernandez
AOAN Coleman Jones		AN Joshua Hathaway
AOAN Brad Gray		AC2 Justin Morgan

